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ABSTRACT

A study determined if teachers discriminated among three different types of direct supervisory communication--information only, information with suggestions, and information with directives--in instructional improvement conferences. Thirty inservice teachers were assigned to three experimental groups and viewed videotapes which simulated supervisory conferences. Each conference differed according to degree of informational versus controlling language. Teacher perceptions of the degree to which the supervisor's behavior indicated supportiveness, authenticity, loyalty, trust, and productivity were measured after each conference. Teachers rated highest the conferences in which the supervisor communicated information with suggestions, rated next, conferences in which the supervisor communicated information only, and lowest the conferences in which the supervisor communicated information with directives. In analyzing these results, it is suggested that information with suggestions provides the teacher with a guide for accepting, revising, or rejecting the supervisor's offered choice, and that there may be a limit to the amount of choice individuals desire. Suggestions are made for further research. (Author/JD)

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Teachers' Discrimination Between Information and Control in Response to Videotaped Simulated Supervisory Conferences

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers discriminate among three different types of direct supervisory communication (information only, information with suggestions, and information with directives) in instructional improvement conferences. Thirty subjects were randomly assigned to three experimental groups according to the Latin Squares design. Each group viewed videotapes which simulated supervisory conferences. Each conference differed according to degree of informational versus controlling language. Teacher perceptions of supportiveness, authenticity, loyalty, trust, and productivity were measured after each conference. Data were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of covariance with a priori orthogonal comparisons. Differences in teachers' perceptions toward the three conferences were found for every measure. Information with suggestions, information only, and information with directives were perceived in descending order of positiveness. These findings were consistent with the communication theory of Decci and Ryan and supervisory conference theory of Glickman that informational language is perceived more positively than controlling language.

Teachers' Discrimination Between Information and Control in Response to Simulated Supervisory Conferences

The context, or environment, in which communication occurs between a supervisor and teacher can be experienced as being either informational or controlling (Decci & Ryan, 1982). Informational environments allow individuals to listen and choose their own courses of action. Controlling environments, in contrast, restrict choice and externally impose upon the individual a predetermined course of action. Supervisors who work with teachers for purposes of instructional improvement often work in ways that might be considered as either informational or controlling.

Blumberg (1974) and Harris (1975) define informational and controlling language as subsets of direct supervision; consisting of information, criticism, suggestions, and directives. Glickman (Note 1) argued that teachers can perceive differences in direct supervision according to language which informs and language which controls (i.e., the difference between what a teacher might do versus what a teacher must do).

The extent to which teachers perceive those language differences in conferences with teachers can be examined empirically with simulation techniques. The use of simulation procedures, which offer controlled experimental conditions, has increased in explorations of the relationships between information presentation and its utilizations (Copeland & Atkinson, 1978; Ripley, 1983). The simulation approach adapts well to a paradigm adopted from communication theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which essentially asks the question: "Who says what, how, to whom, with what effects?" The simulation research strategy allows the manipulation of who, what, how,

and whom (the independent variables) in order to measure effects (the dependent variables). The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers discriminate among different types of direct supervisory communication in a conference for instructional improvement. It was believed that teachers' sex, age, and teaching experience might account for some of the variation in perceptions and therefore were treated as covariates. It was hypothesized that:

1. Teachers would perceive differently informational and controlling conferences.
2. Teachers would perceive supervisory conferences with informational language more positively than supervisory conferences with controlling language as measured by the dependent variables of supportiveness, authenticity, loyalty, trust, and productivity.

Method

Subjects

Thirty in-service teachers, 12 males and 18 females, enrolled in introductory supervision classes were the subjects. The ages of subjects were as follows: one person from twenty to twenty-five, nineteen persons from twenty-six to thirty-five, nine persons from thirty-six to forty-five, and one person over forty-five. Teaching levels of subjects were as follows: two persons in preschools, thirteen in elementary schools, one in junior high school, seven in high schools, and seven who taught across levels. Average teaching experience was 9.5 years. Subjects were randomly assigned to three groups to view the sequences of scripts during the second class meeting.

Apparatus

To insure that language (i.e., what is said) was the only independent variable in this study, three scripts were performed by a professional actor playing the role of an instructional supervisor. Script "A" contained information about the teacher's classroom and criticism of several students' performance. Script "B" was identical to Script "A" with the addition of suggestions concerning what the teacher might do to improve student performance. Script "C" was identical to Script "A" with the addition of directives concerning what the teacher must do to improve student performance. Scripts "B" and "C" differed from each other by only five words. Nonverbal language was kept consistent from script to script.

The videotaped conferences contained the following scripts:

SCRIPT A (Information only)

> I've observed your instruction and I have no qualms about your competence. I recorded that over eighty percent of your students were on task. They were doing what you had planned for them. I noticed a lot of smiles and enthusiastic chatter which indicates to me that the kids see the classroom as a pleasant place to be. Also, I recorded during your classroom discussions that over half of the total talk came from students. They asked many questions and responded to each other. They seemed free to express themselves and were interested in the topic.
>
> The only thing that I noticed for future improvement is that three students were not following the assignment. I went over to them and noticed that they were unclear as to what they were supposed to do. They had hardly begun the assignment by the end of the class.

SCRIPT B (Information with Suggestions) - The same as Script A with the following additional paragraph.

> What you might do is meet with those three students before next class and ask them about the directions. During seat work time you could move around the classroom and look over their shoulders to see how they are doing. You can check their work while they are still doing it. You may want to make these changes.

TABLE 1

Scores and Significance Levels of
Teachers' Perceptions by Scripts

Perceptions	Scripts: A-Information Only	B-Information with Suggestions	C-Information with Directives	F-Values[1]
Supportiveness	3.05	3.47	1.97	A vs. B = 4.37* A vs. C = 29.66** B vs. C = 56.79**
Authenticity	3.59	4.26	3.13	A vs. B = 10.03** A vs. C = 4.80* B vs. C = 28.69**
Loyalty	3.03	4.53	1.93	A vs. B = 18.98** A vs. C = 10.21** B vs. C = 57.04**
Trust	3.00	4.23	2.57	A vs. B = 24.48** A vs. C = 3.02 B vs. C = 44.70**
Productivity	2.63	4.07	2.41	A vs. B = 26.44** A vs. C = 0.63 B vs. C = 35.21**

*Significant at .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

[1] df = (89)

SCRIPT C (Information with Directives) - The same as Script A with the following additional paragraph

What you must do is meet with those three students before next class and ask them about the directions. During seat work time you should move around the classroom and look over their shoulders to see how they are doing. You have to check their work while they are still doing it. I want you to make these changes.

Variables

Dependent variables were defined as follows: Supportiveness was the degree that the supervisor's behavior is oriented towards problem solving, spontaneity, equality, provisionalism, empathy, and description. Trust was the degree of confidence in the supervisor. Authenticity was composed of three factors including personal responsibility, non-manipulation, and salience of self over one's role. Loyalty was the degree of informal authority. Productivity was the likelihood of changing one's teaching as a result of the supervisory conference. Each variable was measured from items derived from instruments developed by Blumberg (1974) and Kottkamp (Note 2). Reliability of measures ranged from a Cronbach alpha of .83 to .95 and construct validity was established by expert panels of supervisors, professors, and teachers. Independent variables were Scripts A, B, and C. Covariates were subjects' sex, years of teaching experience, and age.

Procedures

The three scripts were recorded on videotape and sequenced in three different orders according to the Latin Squares design (Winer, 1971). The subjects were instructed to imagine that the supervisor depicted on the videotape had just observed their classroom, and was meeting with them for purposes of instructional improvement. After viewing each script, subjects completed an instrument measuring the perceived supportiveness and

authenticity of the supervisor, the loyalty and trust generated by the supervisor, and the productivity of the instructional improvement conference. Subjects recorded their responses to each item on a six-point Likert-type scale.

To assure that order of script presentation did not confound teachers' response to script, three different orders were administered. Further, to detect if script and order interactions were an artifact of this study, order effects were analyzed.

Results

Hypothesis number one, that teachers would perceive differently informational and controlling conferences, was analyzed in a two stage procedure. First, a MANCOVA with age, sex, and years experience as covariates was used to analyze the overall script effect. Significant script effect was found with Wilks' criterion $F=8.44$, $\angle .01$. Second, data was subjected to a repeated MANCOVA using a priori orthogonal comparisons (Winer, 1971) for each dependent variable. The results are shown in Table 1. Note that significant differences were found on all five measures with thirteen of the fifteen planned comparisons.

Insert Table 1 about here

The two comparisons that did not differ were on the measures trust and productivity between Script A - Information Only and Script C - Information with Directives. Comparisons on all measures between Script A - Information Only and Script B - Information with Suggestions and between Script B - Information with Suggestions and Script C - Information with Directives were significant.

Hypothesis number two, that teachers would perceive supervisory conferences with informational language more positively than supervisory conferences with controlling language as measured by the dependent variables of supportiveness, authenticity, loyalty, trust, and productivity, was verified by descriptive statistics of mean scores of perceptions of teachers to supervisory Script A (Information Only), Script B (Information with Suggestions), and Script C (Information with Directives). Mean scores are presented in Table 1. Note that the ranking of mean scores of subjects' perceptions are consistent on all five measures. In every case Script B (Information with Suggestions) is perceived more positively than Script A (Information Only) and Script A is perceived more positively than Script C (Information with Directives). The hierarchical relation of perception of scripts B > A > C affirms hypothesis two.

Finally, to determine if script and order interactions were an artifact of this study, a MANCOVA of order and script was performed. There was no overall order effect. However, there was an overall order and script effect, Wilks Criterion F=1.65, $\angle$.05. To understand the nature of this effect, further MANCOVA'S for each independent variable were done. There was no order and script effect for the variables authenticity, loyalty, and productivity but there was an order and script effect for the variables supportiveness and trust (F=2.65, p $\angle$.05; F=2.72, p $\angle$.05). By looking at the mean scores of perceptions by script and order in Table 2, the consistent hierarchical relation of mean scores of perceptions of scripts B > A > C, hold for all but two cases. Order 2 (when subjects viewed Script B first, Script C second, and Script A third) on supportiveness resulted in Script B and Script A having equal means thus scripts A=B > C. Order 2 on Trust, Script C was rated higher than Script A thus B > C > A.

TABLE 2

Order and Script Interactions

Perceptions =	Supportiveness			Authenticity			Loyalty			Trust			Productivity		
Scripts =	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Order 1 (A,B,C)	3.20	3.40	2.24	3.73	4.06	3.05	4.00	4.20	2.10	3.80	4.10	2.90	3.23	4.23	2.46
Order 2 (B,C,A)	2.70	2.70	1.73	3.28	3.85	3.12	2.10	4.20	1.50	1.90	3.90	2.30	1.87	3.33	2.2
Order 3 (C,A,B)	3.25	4.30	1.91	3.75	4.85	3.22	3.00	5.20	2.20	3.30	4.70	2.50	2.80	4.67	2.57

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The results of this study appeared to largely confirm the communication theory of Decci and Ryan (1982) and the supervisory conference theory of Glickman (1984). Teachers discriminated strongly in their perceptions of information and controlling conferences. They rated highest conferences in which the supervisor communicated information with suggestions, rated next conferences in which the supervisor communicated information only, and rated lowest the conference in which the supervisor communicated information with directives. Several writers in supervision (Harris, 1975, Blumberg, 1974, Glickman, 1981) have labeled a supervisor's communication that consists of information, criticism, suggestions, and mandates as directive. The findings of this study suggest that teachers make finer distinctions in such supervisory communication. It would seem that there are at least three subcategories of directive supervisory communication; directive-informational, directive-suggesting, directive-mandating.

The results of this study can be partially explained by Decci and Ryan's (1982) theory of information and control. They posit that the greater choice an individual is given over his/her activities, the more productive and satisfied the individual will be. Our study showed as predicted that information with directives, which gives no choice to teachers, was rated unfavorably while information with suggestions and information alone which gives greater degree of teacher choice was rated more favorably. Yet, if the degree of choice is critical to favored communication, it stands to reason that teachers should prefer information only above information with

suggestions. On a continuum of choice, information only gives the individual the most choice while information with suggestions provides an influencing structure on the individual's choice. Why then do teachers rate information with suggestions higher than information only? The answer might be that in the context of a professional supervisor-teacher relationships, teachers prefer supervisors to give them a sense of direction to their choice. Information only does not provide teachers with any operational framework for improving their instruction. Information with suggestions, however, provides teachers with a guide for accepting, revising, or rejecting the supervisor's offered choice. Therefore, at least in a professional, teacher-supervisory context, there may be a limit to the amount of choice that individuals desire.

The results of this study have also provoked the curiosity of the researchers about script and an order effect. There was a difference in a few cases in how teachers perceive scripts based on the order in which they were viewed. Although the analysis of script and order effect was done as a procedural matter to analyze changes in hierarchical rankings of scripts and the effect did not systematically create such alterations, the potential effect of order is still of interest. It would appear that further studies of script and order might disclose important findings about the effects on teachers when a supervisor changes the order of communication in a conference. For example, is there a difference in how teachers perceive information after it follows directives as compared to when it follows suggestions?

Further questions using Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) paradigm of "who says what, to whom, with what effects?" need to be explored. The question of <u>who</u> is important. We do not know if teachers' perceptions would differ

according to supervisor's age, gender, or appearance. The question of what the supervisor communicates has been partially discussed in the present study. Additional research might be done, however, by changing the topic of the supervisor's communication to focus on different classroom events such as the teachers' verbal skills or the student's classroom behavior. Would changing the observation that is communicated also change the perception of teachers towards the scripts? The question of to whom also may be important. The hypothesis of this study centered on script effect on teachers' perceptions and age, sex, and experience were used as covariates simply to minimize error. The number of subjects was not large enough to test with confidence categories of age, experience, and sex. It would be of interest to conduct studies with larger numbers of subjects to analyze such variables to see if perceptions of scripts varied accordingly. Finally, the last question of the paradigm with what effect suggests a need to test other dependent variables. For example, we do not know whether teachers' observable behaviors in their own classrooms would change as a result of receiving various communications from the supervisor.

Obviously, there are a host of further questions that this study raises. This study has shown that teachers, when viewing simulated video tapes of a supervisor communicating for purposes of instructional improvement, do discriminate among various types of directive language and that information with suggestions is perceived most favorably. The generalizability of such findings to other conditions remains to be tested.

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Footnotes

The order of investigators' names are random, contributions to the study and manuscript were equally shared. We thank Charles K. Franzén, Stephen E. Cramer, and Anthony D. Pellegrini for their assistance in this project.

Note 1: Glickman, C. D. Supervision: The developmental function for school success. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inpress for 1984.

Note 2: Kottkamp, R. B. Supervisory authenticity, communication, productivity, and subordinate loyalty. A paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, March 1982.